



**To:** Council

**Date:** 29 September 2014

**Report of:** Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

**Title of Report:** Scrutiny Briefing

**Purpose of report:** To update Council on the activities of scrutiny function.

## Introduction

The Scrutiny Committee and Finance Panel have met for the first time since the summer break. The Scrutiny work programme for the months ahead is currently being formulated and I would like to thank Members from all parties who have contributed ideas and suggestions.

## Work programme

Lots of substantial issues have been identified for Scrutiny to focus on and these all have been considered by the Committee. We are currently planning and prioritising how to approach these topics in a manageable way. However, it may not be possible to fully cover everything that Members have suggested within our existing resources. In particular, we will have to continue to prioritise the potential review panels, and some of these will need to be dealt with as items at committee meetings, rather than as wider pieces of review work.

The priority for the Committee was to establish one or more reviews under the broad theme of 'reducing inequality', and this work is in the early stages of being scoped.

My detailed report follows:

## Standard Information

1. I will always include the following information:

- Current Panel work showing membership and progress.
  - Forward agendas – these will be indicative only.
  - Recommendations made and the outcome from these.
  - The number and result of any called in decisions or councillor calls for action.
2. This information is included as appendices to this briefing but is in **DRAFT** format awaiting the confirmation of the Scrutiny Committee.
  3. I will also provide verbal updates where there has been progress since the last Committee.

### **Current Activity**

4. At its meeting on 2 September, the Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Oxfordshire Growth Board and the Business in the Community initiative. The Committee also reviewed the Council's performance in the first quarter and received a written response to a number of questions we posed back in June. The Finance Panel focused on Budget Monitoring and Treasury Management. These debates led to a number of recommendations to the City Executive Board. These recommendations, and the executive responses, are included with this report
5. The two pieces of panel work that are already underway have reported good progress:
  - The Oxford Standard Panel report is being finalised and is expected to make a number of recommendations for the City Executive Board to consider in October.
  - Thames Water Utilities investment in the sewerage system in Oxford – We understand that Thames Water will publically launch its 'Catchment study' at the meeting of the Oxford Area Flood Partnership in October, and a joint press release has been agreed.
6. I would like to remind all members of Council that if there is an issue they wish to see scrutinised then they are able to either ask a Scrutiny Councillor to place this on the agenda of the Scrutiny Committee or with 3 supporter add this to the agenda themselves.

Councillor Craig Simmons – Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

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## Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2014 - 2015

This programme represents the work of Scrutiny, including panel work and Committee items. The work programme is divided under the following headings:

1. Standing Panels
2. Review Panels in progress
3. Potential Review Panels (to be established if and when resources allow)
4. Items for Scrutiny Committee meetings
5. Items called in and Councillor calls for action
6. Items referred to Scrutiny by Council
7. Draft Scrutiny Committee agenda schedule

### 1. Standing Panels

Topic	Area(s) for focus	Nominated councillors (no substitutions allowed)
Finance Panel – All finance issues considered within the Scrutiny Function.	See appendix 1	Lead: Councillor Simmons  Councillors Darke, Fooks and Fry
Housing – All strategic and landlord issues considered within the Scrutiny Function.	See appendix 2	Lead: Councillor Smith.  Co-opted Member – Linda Hill Councillors Hollick, Sanders and Wade

## 2. Review panels in progress

Topic	Scope	Progress	Next steps	Nominated councillors
Thames Water investment to improve flooding and sewerage issues in the City.	<p>Issue carried forward from 13/14 Work Programme.</p> <p>To continue engagement with Thames Water Utilities (TWU) at a senior level to ensure delivery of the agreements reached.</p>	<p>Panel members met with TWU in May and obtained agreement to bring forward a whole area study of the condition of Oxford's sewerage system.</p> <p>The governance of this process and subsequent investment will be monitored and challenged via an Expert Group and a Steering Group including Members from the Scrutiny Panel and Officers.</p>	<p>Catchment study will be publically launched at Flood Alliance meeting on 16 October and a joint press statement issued.</p> <p>Governance arrangements to be established.</p> <p>Panel to meet in early 2015 and again once the catchment study is nearing completion.</p>	<p>Lead: Councillor Darke</p> <p>Councillors Pressel, Thomas, Goddard</p>
Oxford Standard Panel	<p>To give advice to the City Executive Board on the content and definition of the Oxford Standard for all Council properties.</p> <p>To outline the timeframe for delivery of this standard. To use the experience and views of tenants and members when delivering the decent homes standard. To comment on the process of this delivery.</p>	<p>Data from the stock condition survey considered by the Group.</p> <p>Broader tenant consultation underway.</p> <p>Report to be complete in time to feed into the asset Management strategy at CEB in October.</p>	<p>Final report due to go to Scrutiny Committee and City Executive Board in October.</p>	<p>Housing Standing Panel members plus the Tenant Scrutiny Group</p> <p>Joint Chairing</p>

**3. Potential Review Panels – to be established if and when resources allow (no particular order)**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Area(s) for focus</b>	<b>Nominated councillors</b>
Budget Scrutiny	Review of budget proposals. Scope to be agreed by Finance Panel in October.	Finance Standing Panel Members
Tackling Inequality	Scope to be determined. Panel to consider focus within the following potential review areas (to be taken one at a time): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Poverty</li> <li>• Food Poverty</li> </ul>	Councillors Thomas, Lloyd-Shogbesan
Growing a Low-Carbon Economy	Scope to be determined. Panel to consider area(s) of focus which could include one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review how the City Council is growing a low-carbon economy.</li> <li>• Renewable energy generated on Council owned buildings and land.</li> <li>• Review the work of the Carbon and Natural Resources Board.</li> </ul>	Councillor Upton
Community Engagement	Scope to be determined. Panel to consider area(s) of focus which could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review how the City Council engages with community leaders and groups to build an on-going dialogue, and their perceptions of the City Council.</li> <li>• Identify and explore key interfaces with Council services and the satisfaction levels, feedback and common complaints of different groups.</li> <li>• Review participation levels in consultations and explore reasons for low participation.</li> </ul>	Councillors Hollick, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Altaf-Khan
Support for the local economy	Scope to be determined. Panel to consider area(s) of focus which could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore how the Council's activities support the local economy and whether there is a case for doing more.</li> <li>• Review efforts to improve relationships with traders and their satisfaction levels.</li> <li>• Explore how smaller businesses can access City Deal funding.</li> </ul>	Councillors Fry, Benjamin, Darke

Cycling	Scope to be determined. Panel to consider area(s) of focus which could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review cycling funding including City and County Council contributions.</li> <li>Explore progress against sought outcomes and value for money achieved.</li> </ul>	Councillors Wolff, Upton
Recycling	Continuation of review established in 2013/14: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To receive an update on the Recycling Fund.</li> <li>To consider community incentives and how to measure their success.</li> <li>Review of recycling rates (at Scrutiny Committee).</li> </ul>	Councillors Fry, Hayes, Simmons

#### 4. Items for Committee meetings

Topic	Area(s) for focus	Lead and other Councillors
Discretionary Housing Payments	Quarterly updates on spending profiles within a framework agreed by the Committee.	Lead: Councillor Coulter
Performance monitoring	Quarterly report on a set of Corporate and service measures chosen by the Committee.	Councillors Altaf-Khan, Simmons, Coulter & Darke
Educational attainment investment	To consider the academic progress and key stage results at schools operating the KRM model compared to those not.	Councillors Altaf-Khan, & Thomas
Fusion Lifestyle contract performance	Regular yearly item agreed again by the Committee to consider performance against contract conditions.	Lead Member: Councillor Simmons
Research commissioned on the effects of welfare reform	To consider research into the impact of welfare reforms in the City.	Lead Member: Councillor Coulter
Highways contract	To review and monitor current arrangements.	TBA
Clean streets	To receive an update on the City Council's approach to graffiti, detritus, littering and waste collections.	TBA
Living Wage	To review how the living wage is enforced through procurement contracts	TBA

New controls over anti-social behaviour	To receive an update on the City Council's changing approach to anti-social behaviour.	TBA
Low Carbon Oxford	To receive an update on the progress of this scheme and plans to progress the low carbon agenda in Oxford.	TBA
Community and Neighbourhood services	To review aims, activities and outcomes; grant distribution; community centres and associations; volunteering; Neighbourhood plans; how better on-going engagement can be established with different communities.	TBA
Individual voter registration	To receive an update on changes to electoral registration and to monitor how the City Council is maximising registration.	TBA
Services for the older residents	To receive an update on how the Council and partners co-ordinate services and activities for over 50s, with a focus on preventing isolation.	TBA
Taxi Licencing	To review rules and processes; to understand driver issues.	TBA
Any item called from the Forward Plan for pre decision scrutiny.	To consider and comment on issues to be decided by the City Executive Board.	N/A

## 5. Items Called in and Councillor Calls for Action

None

## 6. Items referred to Scrutiny by Council

None

# **7. Draft Scrutiny Committee Agenda Schedule**

<b>Date (<i>all 6pm, St. Aldate's Room</i>)</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Lead Member; Officer(s)</b>
6 October 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Oxford Standard Panel Report</li> <li>2. Educational attainment investment</li> <li>3. Towards mental wellbeing and community resilience in Oxford</li> <li>4. Culture Strategy</li> <li>5. Welfare reform, European social fund project</li> </ol>	<p>Cllr Smith</p> <p>Cllr Pat Kennedy; Anna Wright</p> <p>Cllr Turner; Val Johnson</p> <p>Cllr Simm, Cllr Lygo; Peter McQuitty, Ceri Gordon</p> <p>Cllr Brown, Ian Brooke, Paul Wilding</p>
10 November 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Budget Scrutiny proposal</li> <li>2. Performance monitoring – quarter 2</li> <li>3. Consultation and Engagement – interim update report</li> <li>4. Enfranchisement and Empowerment - Individual voter registration</li> <li>5. Discretionary Housing Payments</li> </ol>	<p>Cllr Simmons</p> <p>Neil Lawrence</p> <p>Sadie Paige</p> <p>Jeremy Thomas, Martin John</p> <p>Cllr Susan Brown; Paul Wilding</p>
8 December 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research into the local impact of Welfare Reform</li> <li>2. Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan</li> </ol>	<p>Paul Wilding</p> <p>Cllr Price; Peter Sloman</p>
19 January 2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New Council controls over anti-social behaviour</li> </ol>	<p>Richard Adams</p>



## Scrutiny work programme 2014 - 2015

3 February 2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Performance monitoring – quarter 3</li> <li>2. Cycle City</li> <li>3. Community and Neighbourhood services</li> </ol>	Neil Lawrence  Jo Colwell  Ian Brooke
2 March 2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultation and Engagement</li> </ol>	Sadie Paige

## Appendix 1 - Finance Panel work programme 2014-15

### Items for Finance Panel meetings

Suggested Topic	Suggested approach / area(s) for focus
Budget Scrutiny	Review of the Council's medium term financial strategy.
Budget monitoring	Regular monitoring of projected budget outturns through the year.
Treasury Management	Scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy and regular monitoring of Treasury performance.
Capital process	To receive an update on the implementation of the Capital Gateway process.
Maximising European funding	To consider how the City Council can maximise funding opportunities; invite local MEPs to contribute to the discussion.
Municipal bonds	To receive an update on the establishment of a municipal bonds agency.
Council tax exemptions	To receive an update on the financial implications of different types of exemptions.
Ethical investment	To receive an update on the Council's approach to ethical investments.

### Draft Finance Panel agenda schedule

Date, room and time	Agenda Item	Lead Member; Officer(s)
8 October 2014, St Aldate's Room, 5.30pm	1. Municipal bonds	Nigel Kennedy
	2. Budget Review - scope proposal	Andrew Brown
21 January 2015, St Aldate's Room, 5.30pm	1. Capital programme process review update 2. European funding	David Edwards, Stephen Clarke, Nigel Kennedy MEPs, Heads of Service, Mark Lundy?

Scrutiny work programme 2014 - 2015

5 February 2015, St Aldate's Room, 5.30pm	1. Budget monitoring – quarter 3  2. Treasury Management Strategy 15/16	Nigel Kennedy  Anna Winship
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## Appendix 2 - Draft Housing Panel work programme 2014-15

### Items for Housing Panel meetings

<b>Suggested Topic</b>	<b>Suggested approach / area(s) for focus</b>
Performance monitoring	Regular monitoring of performance measures for Estates Regeneration, Housing Supply and Welfare Reform and Housing Crisis.
Housing Strategy	Review headline priorities and sought outcomes in Housing Strategy at draft stage, and the action plan post-consultation.
Increasing the provision of affordable housing	Monitoring of performance measures; scrutiny of the Housing Business Plan and the Housing Strategy; consider alternative options e.g. pre-fabs and 'pods'; possible review topic.
Homelessness	Monitoring of performance measures; scrutiny of the Housing Business Plan and Housing Strategy; pre-scrutiny of homelessness grant allocations; possible review topics.
Rent arrears	Monitoring of performance measures; bi-annual update reports.
STAR survey results	Monitoring of results.
Tackling under-occupancy	Report on efforts to tackle under-occupancy; consider in rent arrears reports.
Improving thermal efficiency	Update report on work to improve thermal efficiency in the Council's housing stock, including home insulation and boiler replacements.
Private sector licencing	Update report on the scheme; consider views of landlords and PRS tenants.
Unlawful dwellings	A report on the City Council's approach to tackling illegal dwellings e.g. beds in sheds, given that funding ends in April 2015.
Repairs exemptions policy	To scrutinise proposed changes to the current policy.
De-designation of 40+ accommodation	Update report on the final phase of de-designating 40+ accommodation (expected in April 15).
Sheltered Housing	Scrutiny of changes to the City Council's sheltered housing stock. This could include reviewing the County Council's plans and/or the provision of extra care and virtual extra care.
Fuel Poverty	Commission/review research; consider during other items; possible review topic.
Supporting people	Verbal updates on the joint commissioning of housing support services.

**Draft Housing Panel Agenda Schedules**

<b>Date, room and time</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Lead Member; Officer(s)</b>
9 October 2014, Plowman Room, 5pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Performance Monitoring</li> <li>2. Draft Housing Strategy</li> <li>3. Rent arrears</li> <li>4. Leaseholder Payment Options for Major Works</li> </ol>	<p>Neil Lawrence</p> <p>Cllr Seamons; Gary Parsons</p> <p>Helen Bishop</p> <p>Cllr Seamons; David Watt</p>
15 January, 5.30pm (TBC)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Housing budget Scrutiny session. Key documents include the Housing Business Plan, Housing Strategy and Housing Asset Management Strategy</li> </ol>	Cllr Seamons; David Edwards, Stephen Clarke
22 January 2015, Plowman Room, 5pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Star Survey Results</li> </ol>	Gary Parsons
4 February 2015, St Aldate's Room, 5.30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unlawful dwellings</li> </ol>	Ian Wright

### Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker 2014-15

Budget Monitoring 2014/15 – Quarter 1 – Finance Panel 4 September				
Recommendation	Agreed Y/N	Executive response	Lead Member & Officer	Implemented Y/N / due date
1. That urgent action is taken to avoid a loss of subsidy relating to the overpayment of benefits.	Y	Extra action is already being taken, looking at training and processes. The threshold is more stringent this year due to the removal of Council Tax benefit from this calculation.	Cllr Turner / Helen Bishop	Y
2. If necessary to avoid slippage, a flexible approach should be taken to spending the £2m investment in Homelessness Property Acquisitions in 2014/2015. This could include investing in social housing instead.	In part	Note sentiment but other uses are likely to take longer.	Cllr Turner	N/A
3. The premises for the heavy vehicle testing facility should be flexible enough that it can be used for other purposes in the event that the testing facility is not successful.	Y	The facility is expected to be successful.	Cllr Turner	March 2015
4. The capital programme should be a red risk in performance reports until the new capital gateway process proven to be effective.	N	Risks are measured using the Risk Management Framework agreed by Council.	Cllr Turner	N/A
Treasury Management – Finance Panel 4 September				
Recommendation	Agreed Y/N	Executive response	Lead Member & Officer	Implemented Y/N / due date

1. That consideration is given to how the capital process can be made more flexible so that approved projects can be brought forward to mitigate slippage elsewhere in the programme.	In part	Noted. Where possible a flexible approach will be taken. Changes to the capital programme have to be agreed by Council.	Cllr Turner	N/A
<b>Oxfordshire Growth Board - Scrutiny Committee 23 June</b>				
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agreed Y/N</b>	<b>Executive response</b>	<b>Lead Member &amp; Officer</b>	<b>Implemented Y/N / due date</b>
1. For the Terms of Reference to explicitly set out that meeting agendas and minutes will be publicly available and that access to meetings will be possible for Councillors and members of the public.	Y	This suggestion will be referred to the Board	Cllr Price	Dec 2014
<b>Community Engagement Policy Statement - Scrutiny Committee 23 June</b>				
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agreed Y/N</b>	<b>Executive response</b>	<b>Lead Member &amp; Officer</b>	<b>Implemented Y/N / due date</b>
5. To provide a clear statement in the principles on the ambition for engagement focusing on depth as well as breadth.	Y	Merged with recommendation 3.	Cllr Price; Sadie Paige	N/A
6. To provide information on the engagement ambitions set for all consultations during the last year, what was achieved and how this fits with the principles set within the Policy Statement.	Y	To provide this information for all consultations would be a huge piece of work so a sample will be used instead, together with a forward-looking approach.	Cllr Price; Sadie Paige	10 Nov 14
7. To suggest to the Scrutiny Committee	Y	Two consultations identified as	Cllr Price;	2 March 14

an up and coming engagement/empowerment exercise that can act as a pilot study to demonstrate the effectiveness of the principles within this report.		candidates for the pilot as per CEB suggestion. Project brief created for the pilot, which includes the objectives, and a reporting template.	Sadie Paige	
8. To provide a table that shows how all comments received during the consultation on this Policy Statement have been handled.	Y	Expected at 10 November Scrutiny Committee meeting.	Cllr Price; Sadie Paige	10 Nov 14
<b>End of Year Integrated Report – 2013-2014 - Scrutiny Committee 23 June</b>				
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agreed Y/N</b>	<b>Executive response</b>	<b>Lead Member &amp; Officer</b>	<b>Implemented Y/N</b>
2. The Committee supports the purchase of the Iffley Road building as an asset of value to the community and recognises that negotiations are on-going. There is a gap between the asking price and the money available and the City Executive Board is asked to do what it can within reasonable value for money criteria to secure the purchase of this property.	Y	Noted (£250k has been earmarked for acquisition of property).	Cllr Turner; Nigel Kennedy; Jane Lubbock	N
3. To consider the contingency available to support homelessness in light of county proposals for implementing cuts in the Supporting People and if underspends from 13/14 should be maintained within this budget.	N	Current level of contingency considered to be sufficient.	Cllr Turner; Nigel Kennedy; Jane Lubbock	N/A



Fusion Lifestyle Performance 2013-2014 - Scrutiny Committee 23 June				
Additional information requested	Agreed Y/N	Outcome	Lead Member & Officer	Implemented Y/N
<p><b>Facility running costs</b> It was agreed at the June meeting in 2013 that the running costs of the facilities would be shown including all capital investment and loan cost in the next report. This hadn't been done.</p> <p><b>Performance outside of expectations</b> Members asked how poor performance was addressed and asked to see the issues raised and the actions/penalties taken over the last year.</p> <p><b>Publicity Campaign</b> An issue was raised concerning literature used to highlight the Active Women Campaign. The images used were considered to be too stereotypical and gendered. The Committee asked that this issue be taken up with Sports England who run this national campaign.</p> <p><b>Views of non-card users at facilities</b> The Committee asked to see any information on the views and experiences of non-card users.</p>	N/A	Information papers considered by Scrutiny Committee on 2 September.	Cllr Rowley; Lucy Cherry	N

<p><b>Falling attendance amongst young people</b>  The Committee were concerned to see this and wanted some more detailed data and information to understand more fully the reasons behind it and whether it was a particular set of circumstances or a trend.</p> <p><b>Information excluded from the public</b>  The Committee heard a complaint from a member of the public that the information provided outlining the running costs to the Council of each Leisure Facility should be made public because if the Council was still running these centres then the information would be available publically. The Committee heard that this was commercial information but asked that this exclusion is reconsidered by Fusion.</p> <p><b>Investment financing</b>  Members were interested in why the City Council financed investment spending that Fusion Lifestyle was originally required to finance, and in how much this saved the partnership.</p>				
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